

Message Text

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SUBJECT: UP CALM FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN ON ACTIVISM

REFS: (A) MANILA 1684, (B) MANILA 1448

SUMMARY: REACTION OF UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES (UP) COMMUNITY TO GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION ON CAMPUS HAS BEEN ONE OF RESTRAINED RESENTMENT. THE GOP HAS NOW RELEASED ALL BUT TWO OF THE UP STUDENTS ARRESTED IN JANUARY (SEE REF. A). STILL UNDER DETENTION IS THE EDITOR OF THE UP STUDENT NEWS-PAPER, AND THE STATUS OF THE PAPER REMAINS UNCLEAR. WITH STUDENTS NOW PREPARING FOR FINAL EXAMS, REPETITION OF THE JANUARY 23 CAMPUS DEMONSTRATION (SEE REF. B) SEEMS UNLIKELY IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING WEEK OF FEBRUARY 14-21, PHILIPPINE MILITARY AUTHORITIES QUIETLY RELEASED THIRTEEN OF THE FIFTEEN STUDENT LEADERS ARRESTED IN THE JANUARY CRACKDOWN ON CAMPUS ACTIVISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES. STILL DETAINED ARE DITTO SARMIENTO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF STUDENT NEWSPAPER PHILIPPINE COLLEGIAN, AND OLIVER JUMAO-AS, CHAIRMAN OF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE BODY CONCOMSA.

2. CONTINUED DETENTION OF COLLEGIAN EDITOR SARMIENTO

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LEAVES UNRESOLVED FREEDOM OF PRESS ISSUE WHICH SPARKED

JANUARY 23 CAMPUS DEMONSTRATION AND LED TO STUDENT ARRESTS. THE COLLEGIAN, WHICH NORMALLY COMES OUT WEEKLY, HAS NOT APPEARED SINCE JANUARY 19. UP PRESIDENT O.D. CORPUZ HAS TAKEN NO ACTION ON RECOMMENDATION OF COLLEGIAN BOARD OF JUDGES THAT AN INTERIM EDITOR BE APPOINTED TO REPLACE SARMIENTO. CORPUZ REPORTEDLY MAINTAINS THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO APPOINT INTERIM EDITOR, SINCE SARMIENTO WILL BE RELEASED "IN THE NEAR FUTURE." MEANWHILE, SKELETON NEWS-PAPER STAFF DISTRIBUTED FEBRUARY 9 A MIMEOGRAPHED "OPEN LETTER" UNDER THE COLLEGIAN LETTERHEAD. THE LETTER STATED THAT, DESPITE DETENTION OF ITS EDITORS, THE COLLEGIAN HAS NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY SUSPENDED AND WILL RESUME PUBLICATION AS SOON AS CORPUZ TAKES ACTION ON THE BOARD OF JUDGES RECOMMENDATION.

3. STUDENT REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN HAS BEEN RESTRAINED. PRINCIPAL OVERT PROTEST HAS BEEN CIRCULATION OF HANDBILLS CONDEMNING ARRESTS AND CALLING FOR RESTORATION OF FREEDOM OF PRESS ON CAMPUS. BOYCOTT OF CLASSES, MUCH TALKED ABOUT AT UP DURING THE WEEK FOLLOWING STUDENT ARRESTS, FAILED TO MATERIALIZE. SEVERAL TEACH-INS PROTESTING DETENTIONS DREW SOME STUDENTS AWAY FROM CLASSES, BUT FOR THE MOST PART CLASS ATTENDANCE HAS BEEN NORMAL. FEBRUARY 12 VISIT OF UN SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM TO UP, WHERE HE RECEIVED HONORARY DEGREE, WAS UNMARRED BY ANY SIGN OF STUDENT UNREST.

4. COMMENT: MANY UP STUDENTS WERE EXHILARATED BY THE JANUARY 23 DEMONSTRATION, THE BOLDEST SINCE MARTIAL LAW AS DECLARED. HOWEVER, THE GOP'S HEAVY-HANDED REACTION QUICKLY DAMPENED STUDENT ARDOR FOR OVERT PROTEST, BRINGING HOME THE SOBERING REALITY THAT THOSE WHO PROTEST RUN A HIGH RISK OF INCARCERATION. WITH MOST STUDENTS NOW PREOCCUPIED STUDYING FOR FINAL EXAMS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN EARLY MARCH, FURTHER CAMPUS DEMONSTRATIONS SEEM UNLIKELY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. NEVERTHELESS, THE UNDERCURRENT OF RESENTMENT TOWARD MARTIAL LAW REMAINS STRONG AT THE PHILIPPINES' LEADING UNIVERSITY, AND WILL DOUBTLESS CONTINUE TO BE A SOURCE OF ANNOYANCE TO THE MARCOS REGIME IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

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